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HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL

Hearing of May 7, 2014

Subject: Bill 69 - Advertising on the Exterior of City Buses

Good afternoon Chairman Martin and Members of the Council,

My name is Ursula Retherford. I speak in opposition to Bill 69. It is a desperate and ill-advised measure. It would destroy the environmental beauty derived from the absence of bill boards and which is appreciated by residents and visitors alike. Moreover, the bill in its final analysis represents a false economy.

Hawaii, and this is acknowledged in many places, is losing its allure as a tourist destination. People packed like sardines in depersonalized settings, traffic conditions that no 6+ billion train will solve, beautiful vistas marred by oversized structures, tears in the social fabric evidenced by homelessness and lawlessness, and the loss of the Aloha spirit – all reduce the quality of our visitors' experiences. For many it is no longer the paradise promised in the pretty pictures of tourist brochures. The number of return visitors is in decline.

I spend time in Europe every fall and I hear the comments about Hawaii's and the loss of what visitors once came here for. They deplore the trashing of the place they once admired. There are fewer and fewer hana hos.

To this scenario some of you are now thinking of adding the visual blight of moving bill boards. Tacky and offensive to the sense of place and esthetics of many local residents, this move would further reduce the attractiveness of our city as a tourist destination. Our tourist industry is fragile and fickle. How many more straws can we pack on the camel's back before it breaks?

When I hear that some of you are inclined to support this bill even though it goes counter to your philosophy, I am alarmed. How did we get to this worrisome point? When otherwise good people are willing to compromise their values and what they believe in, we are headed in the wrong direction.

I urge you to consider the negative consequences of Bill 69 and search for better ways of finding revenue.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify.


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